

**CITY OF LODI
INFORMAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING
"SHIRTSLEEVE" SESSION
CARNEGIE FORUM, 305 WEST PINE STREET
TUESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2006**

An Informal Informational Meeting ("Shirtsleeve" Session) of the Lodi City Council was held Tuesday, August 29, 2006, commencing at 7:04 a.m.

A. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Members – Beckman, Hansen, Johnson, and Mayor Hitchcock

Absent: Council Members – Mounce

Also Present: City Manager King, City Attorney Schwabauer, and Deputy City Clerk Taylor

B. TOPIC(S)

B-1 "Receive a presentation on Eastside Mobility Access Plan"

Peter Pirnejad, Planning Manager, stated that the City was award an \$80,000 grant from Caltrans to provide the opportunity for a consensus-building exercise toward linking land use with some elements of transportation. The purpose of the grant was to look at key critical access routes to improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility and safety and to aesthetically improve the area, including trees and sidewalks, while being sensitive to the context of the community being developed. The Eastside Mobility Access Plan (EMAP) was so well received by Caltrans that it invited City staff to speak to other grant recipients about pulling together a scope of work in an established corridor of the community to be studied. The study area was comprised of Sacramento Street south of the Lodi Transit Station to Lodi Avenue, Lodi Avenue east to Central Avenue, and Central Avenue south to Tokay Street. Residents within the surrounding community were invited to participate in the creative phase of the study.

In response to Council Member Hansen, Mr. Pirnejad reported that at this time there is no indication that additional funds will be available from Caltrans for implementing the study results; however, Council may wish to consider utilizing transportation or Community Development Block Grant funds to implement study results as growth and opportunities present themselves. He noted that as of this date Public Works has already identified the area of Lodi Avenue at the railroad tracks as a future location for improvements, and the new Smart and Final on Lodi Avenue between Stockton Street and Washington Street will be making landscaping improvements to enhance its property based on the EMAP study recommendations. Council Member Hansen stated that, as Lodi's representative on the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOC), he agreed that improvements needed to be made at Lodi Avenue and the railroad tracks; however, he expressed concern about Public Works installing improvements and then SJCOC constructing an underpass project at that intersection.

City Manager King commented that the EMAP study did not look at funding for projects nor did it identify the feasibility of implementing improvements or maintenance costs on improvements. He shared that at this time there is no "next phase" to the study because there is no cost structure or funding available when measured against other capital projects throughout the Qty. At this time, there is no commitment by Council to implement the study; however, there may be opportunities over the course of the next decade where various elements could be implemented through conditions placed upon private development, both in terms of construction and maintenance, or through available program or tax implemented funding.

Community Development Director Hatch stated that, while Caltrans currently offers no additional funding to implement the study, the topic of the study is being discussed by the legislature, which prompted the Caltrans grant program. He shared that, with the completion of the design phase of the study, the City is ahead in its position should grant funds become available.

Rosemary Dudley, Urban Designer, representing Moore Iacofano Goltsman (MIG), provided a highlight of the process and outcome of the study covering Sacramento Street, Lodi Avenue, and Central Avenue (filed). In January 2006, the steering committee, comprised of representatives from the community and the Public Works, Community Development, and Police departments, met to discuss and assess existing conditions within the study area. The committee conducted a site tour to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the area in order to shape what would be taken to the community in a bilingual community workshop conducted on March 29 at Heritage Elementary School. Through neighborhood flyers, word of mouth, and communication to local school students and parents, more than 50 people were drawn to participate in an animated, hands-on exercise to review maps of the area and identify needs they felt were priorities. During the initial presentation, it was explained that the workshop was the vision portion of the study and that implementation could be years off – the goal was to set specific design guidelines to be followed as funding became available.

Principal ratings within each category were: 1) pedestrian network including sidewalk amenities, crosswalks, railroad crossing, signage, and landscaping; 2) the active public realm which included lighting, gathering spaces, alleys, and safety; 3) a sense of place with regard to cultural design and how to focus on the identity of the community; and 4) circulation of flow including bus stops, bike lanes, and a potential roundabout. Public Works has completed a significant amount of improvements on Sacramento Street from Pine Street to the transit station and will continue its work toward Lodi Avenue. Walking south from the transit station, the sidewalk is in poor condition, unpleasant fencing exists, and poor lighting presents the appearance of a safety concern. A small gathering space is suggested for the northeast corner of Sacramento Street at Lodi Avenue, which would contain planting, landscaping, seating, and signage for pedestrians and vehicles including transit and social services resources. Planning Commissioners suggested that the Maple Square Park and area be considered for incorporation in the improvements for the district. On Lodi Avenue, many challenges and opportunities were provided including the safe right-of-way for pedestrians and bicycles on such a busy, four-lane thoroughfare. One of the main topics of discussion was the limit of space for trees, resting areas, and the enlargement of very narrow sidewalks. Improvements to the railroad crossing have been completed, greatly reducing the danger to pedestrians that were moving into traffic to avoid uneven and rough pavement when crossing the tracks.

In response to Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson, Ms. Dudley stated that preliminary studies by Public Works staff have indicated that there appears to be an excess capacity on Lodi Avenue between Stockton Street and Central Avenue, which allowed the committee to look at the number of travel lanes and develop two options: 1) allow for a substantial sidewalk width and a central median planted with trees by reducing the travel lanes to two east of Stockton Street, or 2) maintain two travel lanes and a central left-turn lane with no center median, which would allow for sidewalks on both sides. The second option received the majority of support from community members during the workshop.

The committee also reviewed under-utilized properties and provided suggestions for owner improvements to include landscaping, pocket park treatments, and the addition of bus stops which currently do not exist on Lodi Avenue. At the workshop, there was a great deal of enthusiasm during the discussion of Central Avenue, which flows through the cultural heart of the neighborhood. The district is mixed use and experiences a lower traffic flow, which allowed more options to discuss wider sidewalks, lighting at alleys intersecting with Central Avenue, and enhanced landscaping. Three options for increasing the sidewalk width, raising crosswalk treatments, and allowing for the gateway were reviewed: 1) leaving mature trees intact, extending and expanding the sidewalk on the street side between the trees and street; 2) provide an asymmetrical sidewalk that increased the north-faced sidewalk into a promenade; and 3) allow for diagonal parking within the area (a combination of parallel and diagonal parking currently exists). The third option was the most widely accepted by the community; however, Public Works informed the committee that Central

Avenue has been identified as a future location for a Class 1 bike lane, which would not allow for diagonal parking due to safety issues/ therefore, the committee's final report focused on recommending options two and three.

Ms. Dudley reported that the first series of action steps identified and recommended are: 1) integrate with the Smart and Final site design; 2) extend the streetscape design at Lodi Avenue; 3) create a social corner at Lodi Avenue and Sacramento Street; and 4) focus on the improvements on Central Avenue, and plan that first corridor within this study to receive the full set of improvements. The basic premise is pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and safety, and then supplemental is transit, circulation, and parking while using a corridor that people would typically use with the main anchor being the station on Sacramento Street reaching into the heart of the community on Central Avenue.

Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson suggested that, in consideration toward celebrating cultural community, community members might be encouraged to paint and design their homes in colors and facades that celebrate the mix of cultures and ethnicity, and consider painting murals on the walls of businesses in the Central Avenue area. He shared that many vibrant colors and themes throughout cultural centers in Chinatown, Japantown, and other ethnic-centered cities come alive and are established as the heart of communities.

In reply to Mayor Hitchcock, Ms. Dudley shared that a roundabout on Central Avenue received more positive response than expected; however, there may not be adequate right-of-way in that intersection to accommodate a roundabout with the traffic flow and potential bike lane. Also in reply to Mayor Hitchcock, Ms. Dudley explained that, during the discussion of Lodi Avenue between Sacramento and Central Avenue, the focus of the community was very much in disagreement in terms of accommodating four travel lanes with current sidewalks versus reducing lanes in certain places to allow for pedestrian traffic. A middle ground was found for recommendation purposes, but not every member of the community present that day would agree with the recommendations.

Council Member Hansen remarked that the study results bring up a key issue in deciding the future of a main thoroughfare such as Lodi Avenue. When proposing to reduce lane traffic on an established street by reducing the lanes and the flow of traffic, Public Works may want to consider input not only from local neighbors, but from a larger group of the community that utilizes the thoroughfare.

In response to Council Member Beckman, Ms. Dudley stated that the level of service on Lodi Avenue would be affected by the reduction of lanes, but that the design recommendation allowed for right-turn lanes as well as a central left-turn lane to preserve the level of traffic flow while addressing pedestrian and bicycle safety.

City Manager King commented on the importance of policy consideration, stating that Public Works and Planning have recently been discussing the maintenance and level of traffic flow and service in intersections, and whether it conflicts or enhances the General Plan goal of creating a pedestrian-oriented community. Within that context, this study emphasizes a plan that encourages pedestrian traffic to blend with the planned needs of vehicle traffic. He shared that staff is in a position to suggest to Council recommendations for cooperative projects that would support a safe and balanced level of service for vehicles and pedestrians.

In reply to Council Member Hansen, Community Development Director Hatch stated that, with the addition of Smart and Final, the community experiences an immediate payoff on the EMAP study. It will provide a positive impact in the area by upgrading the property with landscaping in the parking lot and enhanced landscaping and/or plazas at the east and west corners of the property on Lodi Avenue. While Smart and Final is not large enough to fall within the new design guidelines adopted by Council, Smart and Final is highly motivated to voluntarily comply with beautification standards within the community.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Myrna Wetzel mentioned that in Turlock the traffic flows off of main arteries into the local neighborhoods and she asked that traffic flow caused by these unintended consequences be a part of the review and decision-making process in implementing the EMAP study.

C. COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

D. ADJOURNMENT

No action was taken by the City Council. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 a.m.

ATTEST:

Jacqueline L. Taylor
Deputy City Clerk